

Volunteers are Needed for an American Eel Survey on the Sudbury River

Overview: The American eel is currently under consideration for inclusion on the endangered species list. Baseline data is needed on the eel population in the Merrimack River watershed. This data will help agency personnel evaluate the effectiveness of management actions. The proposed eel survey will be conducted during the week of August 4-8. This is a continuation of survey work which was conducted in 2013. We hope to collect data over a 10-year period to better understand the yellow phase eel population in the Sudbury River.

Eel pots and fyke nets will be placed in several locations in the 9.7 mile river reach between Fairhaven Bay and Heard Pond. Eel pots will be serviced by boat crews of 3-4 people. Each boat crew will have at least one biologist on board to operate the boat and direct survey activities.

Survey Protocol: Baited eel pots will be deployed in specific locations as described above. Each day between 9 A.M. and 1:00 P.M. eel pots will be retrieved. Captured eels will be measured, tagged and released. A subgroup of eels will be lethally evaluated for the presence of disease, and age and gender determinations. After retrieval, eel pots will be baited and redeployed.

Volunteer Activities: Following training, volunteers will be responsible for hauling eel pots, removing captured eel from the pot, measuring and marking eels and baiting and redeploying eel pots.

The Ideal Volunteer: The ideal volunteer will be available all five days of the survey from 9:00 A.M.- 1:00 P.M. each day. Volunteers need to be good swimmers, capable of working for 4 hours in hot and rainy conditions, comfortable in small boats even while standing, be able to haul 20 pound eel pots and be willing to handle eels.

Please contact Libby Herland at 978-443-4661 x11 or libby_herland@fws.gov if you would like to volunteer.